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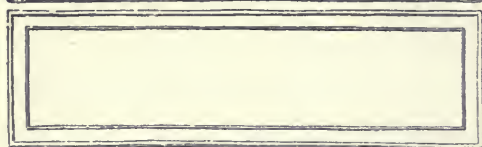
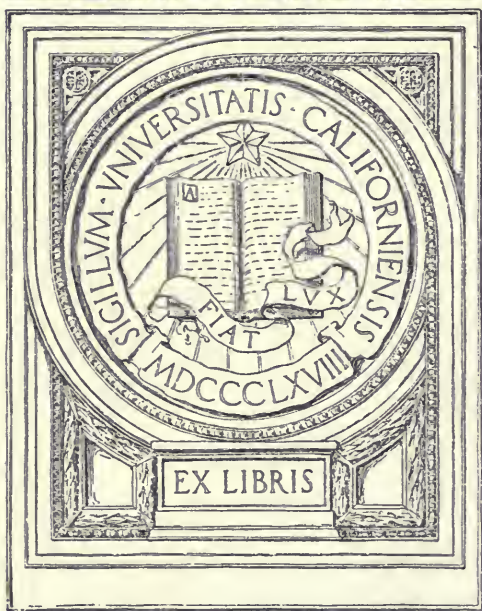


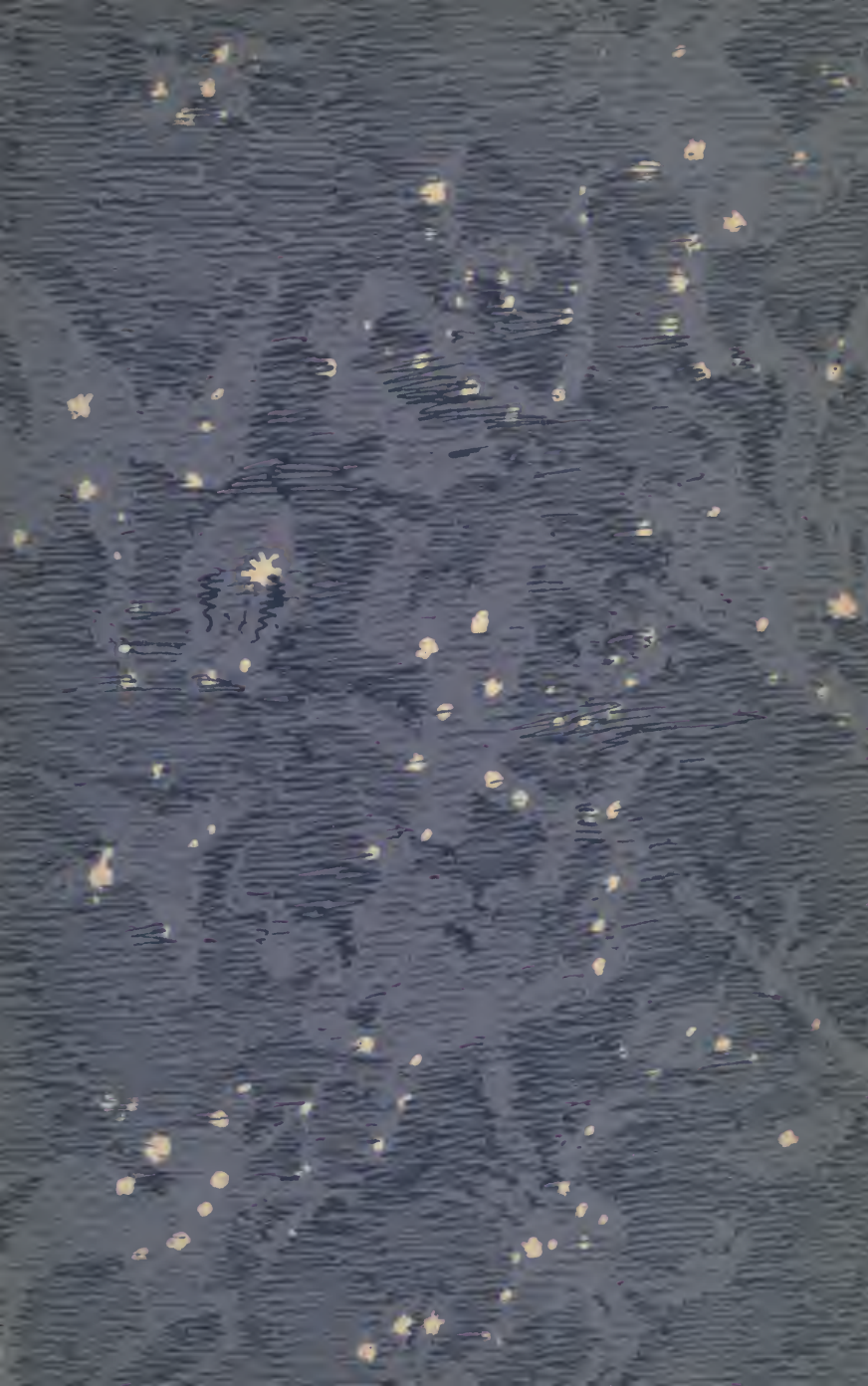
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# *The Hour of Magic*









*The*  
HOUR *of* MAGIC

*and other Poems by*

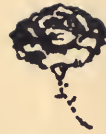
W. H. Davies



*Decorated by*  
William Nicholson



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New York & London  
Mcmxxii



AIRBORNE TO VIRGO  
ZEPHYRUS ZOLTA  
TRAVEL

*Made and printed in Great Britain  
by George W. Jones, 12-14 Gough Square, London, E.C.4.*

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To Elizabeth Drury, with our love  
W.D.—W.N.



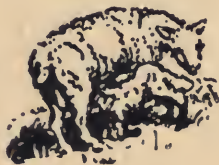
## *The Hour of Magic*

**T**HIS is the hour of magic, when the Moon  
With her bright wand has charmed the tallest tree  
To stand stone still with all his million leaves!

I feel around me things I cannot see;  
I hold my breath, as Nature holds her own.

And do the mice and birds, the horse and cow,  
Sleepless in this deep silence, so intense,

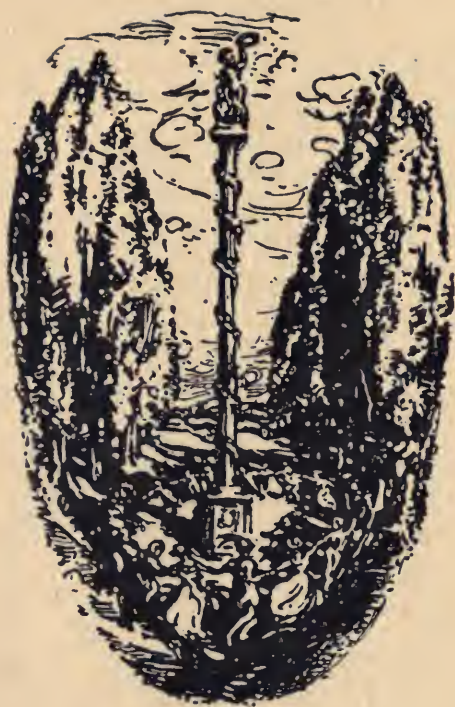
Believe a miracle has happened now,  
And wait to hear a sound they'll recognise,  
To prove they still have life with earthly ties?



## *The Beautiful*

**T**HREE things there are more beautiful  
Than any man could wish to see:  
The first, it is a full-rigged ship  
Sailing with all her sails set free;  
The second, when the wind and sun  
Are playing in a field of corn;  
The third, a woman, young and fair,  
Showing her child before it is born.





## *Impudence*

ONE morning, when the world was gray and cold,  
And every face looked dull and full of care  
There passed me, puffing clouds of silver breath,  
A lovely maiden, with a jaunty air.

The red carnations flamed in both her cheeks,  
Her teeth were white and shown; while either eye  
Shone like a little pool on Christchurch Hill  
When it has stolen more than half the sky.

And when I saw such beauty, young and fresh,  
So proud, although the day was gray and cold,  
"Who ever saw," I laughed, and stared amazed,  
"Such impudence before in this old world!"

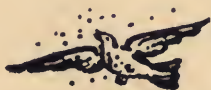




## *Wasted Hours*

**H**OW many buds in this warm light  
Have burst out laughing into leaves !  
And shall a day like this be gone  
Before I seek the wood that holds  
The richest music known ?

Too many times have nightingales  
Wasted their passion on my sleep,  
And brought repentance soon ;  
But this one night I'll seek the woods,  
The Nightingale and Moon.



## *Two Women*

### *The Mother*

**T**HE midwife nearly drowned my son,  
And beat him hard, before he'd give  
That cry a mother longs to hear  
To prove her precious babe will live.

### *The Wife*

**I** WISH that she had drowned him quite,  
Or beat your precious babe to death ;  
Since he has grown so fierce and strong  
He'll beat me out of my last breath.

Your precious babe is now a man,  
But, mother, he's not worth the skin—  
As husband, father, or a son—  
That he was made for living in.





## *Pastures*

THAT grass is tender, soft and sweet,  
And well you young lambs know't:  
I know a pasture twice as sweet,  
Although I may not show't;  
Where my five fingers go each night  
To nibble, like you sheep,  
All over my love's breast, and there  
Lie down to sleep.



## *Her Merriment*

WHEN I had met my love the twentieth time,  
She put me to confession day and night:  
Did I like woman far above all things,  
Or did the songs I make give more delight?

"Listen, you sweeter flower than ever smiled  
In April's sunny face," I said at last—  
"The voices and the legs of birds and women  
Have always pleased my ears and eyes the most."

And saying this, I watched my love with care,  
Not knowing would my words offend or please:  
But laughing gayly, her delighted breasts  
Sent ripples down her body to her knees.



## *Joy*

**P**OOOR souls, who think that joy is bought  
With pelf;  
The bait that captures joy is joy  
Itself.

My joy it came mysteriously  
At birth;

I give it to, not take it from  
The earth.

Have pity on my enemy:  
Again,

And yet again, my triumph gives  
Him pain.

Come, Death, give me life's perfect end;  
Take me

In my sleep, Oh Death, and do not  
Wake me.







## *Lamorna Cove*

I SEE at last our great Lamorna Cove,  
Which, danced on by ten thousand silver feet,  
Has all those waves that run like little lambs,  
To draw the milk from many a rocky teat,  
Spilt in white gallons all along the shore.  
Who ever saw more beauty under the sun ?  
I look and look, and say, "No wonder here's  
A light I never saw on earth before—  
Two heavens are shining here instead of one."  
And, like the wild gulls flashing in my sight,  
Each furious thought that's driving through my brain  
Screams in its fresh young wonder and delight.



## *Wild Oats*

**H**OW slowly moves the snail, that builds  
A silver street so fine and long :  
I move as slowly, but I leave  
Behind me not one breath of song.  
Dumb as a moulting bird am I,  
I go to bed when children do,  
My ale but two half-pints a day,  
And to one woman I am true.  
Oh ! what a life, how flat and stale—  
How dull, monotonous and slow !  
Can I sing songs in times so dead—  
Are there no more wild oats to sow ?



## *The Grief of Others*

ONCE more I see the happy young  
Broken by grief and pain ;  
That tears have made like earth's red worms  
Turned white by days of rain.  
Once more I see the new-made wife  
From her dead husband torn ;  
When down she sits and weeps, and laughs,  
And rocks her babe unborn.  
And when I see a hearse that takes  
A coffin through the town,  
Or pass the quiet house of death,  
That has its blinds drawn down—  
Such pity moves me for the dear  
Ones left to mourn behind,  
That I am glad my loves are dreams  
Made purely of the mind:  
That take expression for their grave,  
When they have served their hour ;  
And I create a younger brood  
To charm me with new power.



## *The Portrait*

SHE sends her portrait, as a swallow,  
To show that her sweet spring will follow;  
Until she comes herself, to share  
With me a pillow and her hair.  
To this fine portrait of my Dear,  
With nothing but dead matter near,  
I whisper words of love, and kiss  
The cardboard dewy with my bliss.  
This is her hair, which I will bind  
Around my knuckles, when inclined  
To bandage them in skeins of gold.  
These are her lips, in paper mould,  
Which when I touch appear to move,  
As conscious of my burning love.  
These are her eyes, now hard and set,  
And opened wide, which Love will shut.  
Lord, is my kiss too poor and weak  
To make this portrait move and speak,  
And close these eyes in fear of this  
Strong love of mine, half bite, half kiss!  
This kiss that would in fierce delight



Burn on her soft white flesh, and bite  
Like a black fly when, stiff and old,  
He's blind, and dying of the cold!  
Now, when I rest awhile from kissing,  
My room looks lonely with her missing.  
Now empty seems that chair, where she  
Could sit this night and smile to see  
Her own light fingers work with grace  
Straight cotton into cobweb lace;  
Or when they rub that small gold band  
That makes her mine, on her left hand.  
O that my love were sitting there,  
Before me, in that empty chair;  
Rocking the love-light, where it lies  
Cradled for joy in her two eyes.  
Till in the flesh she comes to kiss,  
Be happy, man, that she sends this—  
Her own dear portrait, as a swallow,  
To show that her sweet spring will follow.



## *A Thought*

WHEN I look into a glass,  
Myself's my only care ;  
But I look into a pool  
For all the wonders there.

When I look into a glass,  
I see a fool :  
But I see a wise man  
When I look into a pool.





## Our Sussex Downs

MY youth is gone—my youth that laughed  
and yawned

In one sweet breath, and will not come again ;

And crumbs of wonder are my scanty fare,

Snatched from the beauty on a hill or plain.

So, as I look, I wonder if the land

Has *breathed* those shadows in the waters blue !

From all first sounds I half expect to hear,

Not only echoes, but *their* echoes too.

But when I see—the first time in my life—

Our Sussex Downs, so mighty, strong and bare

That many a wood of fifteen hundred trees

Seems but a handful scattered lightly there—

“What a great hour,” think I, “halfway ’twixt Death

And Youth that laughs and yawns in one short  
breath.”



## *Telling Fortunes*

"YOU'LL have a son," the old man said—  
"And then a daughter fair to meet  
As any summer nights that dance  
Upon a thousand silver feet."

"You dear old man, now can you tell  
If my fair daughter 'll marry well?"  
The old man winked his eye and said,  
"Well, knowing men for what they are,  
She'll break their hearts, because she'll not  
Be half as good as she is fair."

The new-made wife was full of pain,  
And raised her head and hoped again.

"And will my son be fine and smart  
And win a noble lady's heart?"  
The old man winked his other eye—

"Well, knowing women as we do,  
The kind of man they most prefer,  
He'll break their hearts, because he'll be  
A fool, a coxcomb, and a cur."

## *The Collar*

WHO taught fair Cleopatra how to bring  
Mark Antony to her knees—the touch of love,  
As soft as velvet, that could stroke the wing  
Of a butterfly and take no powder off;  
The gentle purr that made eternal Rome,  
With all its marble, melt in that sweet sound,  
And vanish like the mist, when it has come  
Into a man's full height above the ground?  
When I see how a cat has, even now,  
With its own body curled and crouching low,  
Made a large, heavy collar, soft and warm,  
For that girl's neck, I think, with no alarm,  
If, young one, that's your friend—as it was Hers—  
I'll watch you round the corner of my fears.





## *To a Fool*

IF, when thy body's end has come,  
Thy mind must find another home,  
Make no mistake with man again;  
Come into flesh the thing thou art  
In all except thy body's part—  
Come as a silly ass, and plain.

Such were my thoughts, their honest parts,  
But Oh, what liars are kind hearts!

What smooth false words such hearts demand:  
"Thy dreams," said I, "give more surprise  
Than when I chased bright butterflies,  
And missed them with my snapping hand."





## *Strength*

WHAT lies I read, that men of strength  
Have keen and penetrating looks  
That, flashing here and flashing there,  
Command success—what foolish books !  
For when we go to life we find  
The men and dogs that fight till death  
Are sleepy eyed, and look so calm  
We wonder if they live by breath !  
Love, too, must hold her saucy tongue,  
And turn on us two sleepy eyes,  
To prove she is no painted doll,  
And full, like books, of pretty lies.



## *To Bacchus*

I'M none of those—Oh Bacchus, blush !  
That eat sour pickles with their beer,  
To keep their brains and bellies cold ;  
Ashamed to let one laughing tear  
Escape their hold.

For only just to smell your hops  
Can make me fat and laugh all day,  
With appetite for bread and meat :  
I'll not despise bruised apples, they  
Make cider sweet.

'Tis true I only eat to live,  
But how I live to drink is clear ;  
A little isle of meat and bread,  
In one vast sea of foaming beer,  
And I'm well fed.





## *A Woman's History*

WHEN Mary Price was five years old,  
And had a bird that died,  
She laid its body under flowers;  
And called her friends to pray to God,  
And sing sad hymns for hours.

When she, before her fifteenth year,  
Was ruined by a man,  
The neighbours sought him out, and said—  
“You come along and marry her,  
Or hang till you are dead.”

When they had found the child he wronged,  
And playing with her doll,  
“I’ll come along with you,” said she—  
“But I’ll not marry any one  
Unless my doll’s with me.”

With no more love’s heat in her than  
The wax upon her arm;  
With no more love-light in her eyes  
Than in the glass eyes of her doll—  
Nor wonder, nor surprise.

When Mary Price was thirty-five,  
And he was lying dead,  
She wept as though her heart would break:  
But neighbours winked to see her tears  
Fall on a lover's neck.

Now, Mary Price is seventy-five,  
And skinning eels alive:  
She, active, strong, and full of breath,  
Has caught the cat that stole an eel,  
And beaten it to death.



## *The Trance*

THE Moon is beautiful this night :  
She is so clear and bright,  
That should she smile  
On any sleeping face awhile,  
The eyes must then their slumber break,  
And open, wide awake ;  
And should she pass a sleeping bird,  
Where no leaves touch or meet,  
He'll wake and, in his softest voice,  
Cry Sweet ! Sweet ! Sweet !  
The Moon is beautiful, but who is this  
That hides his face from hers ;  
That, when she makes eyes through the leaves,  
Is full of trembling fears ?  
The night breeds many a thing that's strange :  
The wretched owl that in distress  
Hoots every star that comes to help  
The evening in her loveliness ;  
The half-blind bats that here and there  
Are floundering in the twilight air ;  
The rat, that shows his long white teeth

Of hard, unbreakable bone—  
That take him where his notions go,  
Through wood and lead, cement and stone;  
And cats, that have the power,  
About the midnight hour,  
To hide their bodies' size  
Behind two small green eyes.  
The night has these—but who is this  
That like a shadow glides  
Across the shadows of the trees,  
And his own visage hides?  
He hides his face—we wonder what  
That face would look like in the sun:  
Perhaps an ugly bloated thing  
That has more heavy chins than one;  
Or is it sharp and white and thin,  
With a long nose that tries to hook  
Almost as sharp a chin—  
And with a cold, hard, cruel look?  
We cannot say, but this is sure—  
If we this night saw *it*,  
We'd rush to strike that monster down,



To drown him in our common spit.

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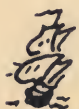
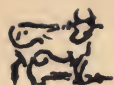
This morning, when the blackbird near  
Was frightened from his thirteenth song,  
There was a lady buried here—  
A lady, beautiful and young.  
And all the rings she wore in life,  
As one betrothed and as a wife,  
Were left upon her fingers still,  
According to her living will.  
But there was one who thought and thought,  
Until one thought possessed his head;  
And now he goes, though full of fear  
Of that clear moon, to rob the dead.  
I will not say  
Whose beauty had less fault:  
That lady, where she lay,  
Or that fair moon outside,  
That kissed the mouth of her black vault.  
Oh God, it was a lovely sight:  
She was so beautiful in death,  
That, till her own looks pitied her,  
No mortal could with living breath.  
But what cared he for her fair face



When, by his lamp, in that dark place,  
He saw the jewels there,  
Shaking with life, and greedy, where  
They nibbled at the small, gold bands  
On her cold, lifeless hands:  
But though he turns those rings around,  
They make no downward move, when pulled,  
To come from her white hand to his—  
He'll cut her fingers off for gold !  
But ah, no sooner had he cut  
One finger with his knife,  
Than her white flesh, so firm and smooth,  
Rippled with sudden life!  
Now if a cobweb touched his face,  
This moment, in that haunted place,  
He would have fallen to the ground,  
Caught in a net of steel, and bound;  
A little leaf, dropped on his head,  
Would be a bolt to strike him dead :  
But when he heard the lady sigh,  
And saw her body rising there,  
A second fear released the first,  
From stupor into active fear;

And when outside that vault again,  
With space to use his trembling knees,  
He ran and ran—nor thought of light,  
Or shadows under trees.  
The first thoughts of that lady  
Were delicate and pure:  
She looked to see if her fair body  
Was covered well and sure ;  
Her second thoughts were home and love—  
And quickly did that lady move.  
Home to her husband, where that man,  
In misery full and deep,  
Kneels at an empty chair and sobs ;  
To her two little ones that sleep—  
They are so small in size  
That their sweet tender mouths are still  
No bigger than their wondering eyes.  
What joy, and what astonishment  
For him, who suffers for her sake !  
But the little ones will certainly  
Expect their mother when they wake.

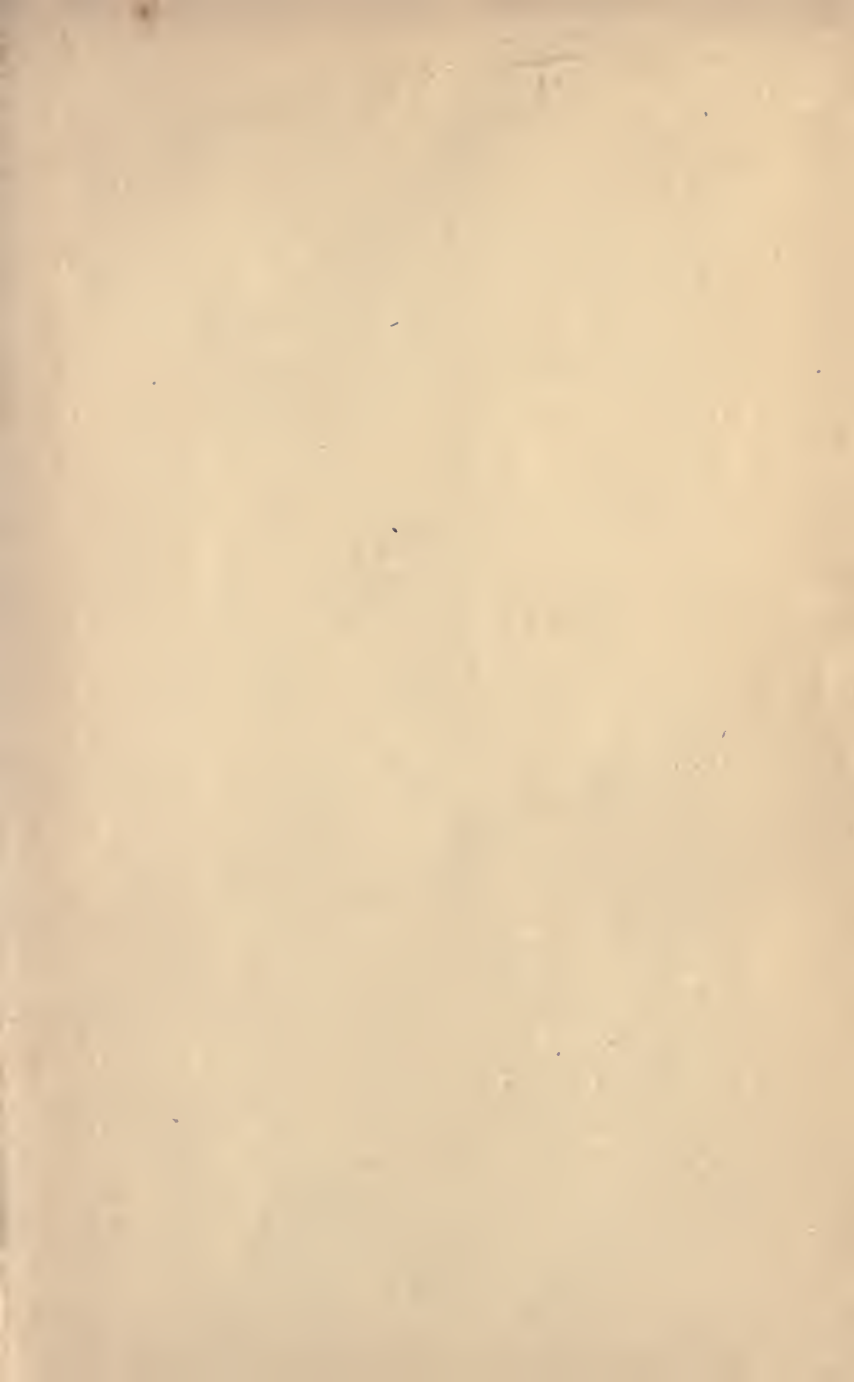












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